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THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

March 13, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Khrushchev's February 17 Memorandum to the Chancellor

As Ambassador Greve and Assistant Secretary Kohler informed you on March 10, the Soviet memorandum of February 17 was discussed at a Four Power Working Group meeting on March 8. The consensus at that meeting (which was in accord with our earlier conclusions transmitted to you with the text of the Soviet memorandum in my memorandum of March 10) was that the Soviet memorandum is:

- 1) a restatement of the standard Soviet positions on a peace treaty, Germany, Berlin, et cetera;
- 2) a move to build pressure for early progress (along Soviet lines) on the German and Berlin problems; and
- 3) a possible attempt to engage the Federal Government in bilateral talks.

The Germans said they had no intention of taking up bilateral discussions with the Soviets on these subjects, and that they wished to consult further quadripartitely in Washington before replying formally to the Soviet communication.

On our side, we said we wished to know the results of Khrushchev's discussions with Ambassador Thompson before commenting further.

In response to your request to Mr. Kohler, there are enclosed the Soviet commentaries on their memorandum, which seem to confirm that this is indeed the start of a campaign to get negotiations under way again on Germany and Berlin.

*Dean Rusk*

Dean Rusk

Enclosure:

Moscow commentaries of  
March 4 and March 5, 1961.

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Mar. 6, 1961

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## Belharov Commentary

Moscow, in English to the United Kingdom, Mar. 4, 1961, 1830 GMT--L

(Text) Very important questions are covered in yesterday's Soviet memorandum to the German Federal Government. Sixteen years have passed since the end of World War II; this war in which so many states took part and which left so many problems in its wake. Many of them have already been settled, but the most important problem of all—a peace treaty with Germany—is still outstanding. This, as the Soviet memorandum points out, has a most adverse effect, not only on the situation in Germany, but on the whole European scene.

The Soviet Union has repeatedly shown its readiness to solve the problem of a peace treaty with the Western powers and with the participation of the two German states, and the Soviet Government also feels now that the question of a peace treaty with Germany cannot be postponed any longer. With this in view, the Soviet Government is ready to enter into negotiations with the Government of the German Federal Republic and to discuss in detail a draft plan for a peace treaty approved by the governments of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other socialist countries which were involved in the war with Germany.

This draft has been drawn up encompassing all the changes which have taken place in Germany, and particularly the plain fact that there are now not one but two sovereign German states. This being so, the Soviet Government intends to conduct negotiations with the direct participation of the Germans themselves, bearing their national interests in mind.

It is quite obvious that the absence of a peace treaty prevents stable peace in Europe and introduces an element of uncertainty into international relations. This is an advantage only to those who want to change the existing situation by force of arms.

Look at the present policy of the Bonn authorities and their NATO allies in this light. They are relying on equipping the Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons. The memorandum of the Hitlerite generals, which caused such a stir through the world, makes it quite clear that the Bonn militarists are out for political power. It must be remembered that West Germany has no equal in military strength among all the European partners in NATO. Consequently, the Bonn military leaders feel that the moment has come for a trial of strength and that it is time to achieve what Hitler failed to achieve. This is no exaggeration, it is the policy actually being pursued by Strauss, Heusinger, and many ex-Nazis.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that the NATO leaders--far from opposing this dangerous policy--are giving it every encouragement. A peace treaty with Germany would end the criminal schemes of the Bonn militarists and would clear the air in Europe.

Vladimirov Commentary

Moscow, in German to Germany, Mar. 5, 1961, 1200 GMT--L

(Excerpts) What is the main idea in the Soviet memorandum of Feb. 17? This is a diplomatic document that has been worked out in great detail and it occupies more than half a page in PRAVDA. To me the main aspect seems to be that the memorandum opens up the possibility for a fundamental change in relations between the German Federal Republic and the Soviet Union, a change in the direction of friendship and constructive cooperation.

6. Here it should be pointed out frankly that the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany is the most important prerequisite for such a change. As the memorandum notes, this is the main thing today in Soviet-West German relations. Why do we think that? Because you can hardly expect good relations between states when the government of one of them officially characterizes the other one as its potential enemy and openly asks for the revision of frontiers. Yet this is just what the Federal German Republic is doing today.

I should like to be understood correctly. When we in Moscow point to these and other facts we do not do so because the Soviet union is afraid of the bundeswehr, not even of one equipped with atomic weapons. No, the Soviet Union has everything it needs to defend its own interests and its friends' interests. But it is natural that we cannot ignore speeches and actions which contain the seeds of a new war. It is for just this reason that the Soviet memorandum points out directly: Things cannot continue like this. Either there will be a development toward an even more dangerous exacerbation of relations between states and of military conflicts, or a peace treaty will be concluded.

We know, of course, that there are certain circles of considerable influence in the Federal Republic which oppose a peace treaty. It is in the name of these circles that the FRANKFURTER ALLEMEINDE called, even before publication of the Soviet memorandum, for rejection of the proposals it contains for a peace treaty.

Why? What does the Federal Republic have to lose by a peace treaty? Part of its territory? Under no circumstances. The frontiers which have come about in consequence of World War II are in any case final. As for the chances for reunification of Germany, are they any greater today when there is no peace treaty? On the contrary, conclusion of a peace treaty would be an important condition for solution of the national task of the German people. The Berlin problem is being mentioned, too, but the conclusion of a peace treaty with the two German states, as is noted in the Soviet memorandum, would provide the Federal Republic with far-reaching possibilities to defend its interests in West Berlin. In that case the representatives of the Federal Republic would be one of the parties to the peace negotiations.

And, in general, I should like to stress that we are not at all bent on forcing any kind of diktat upon the Germans, such as that of Versailles or the peace of Brest, which was forced on our country at that time. The Soviet draft peace treaty with Germany is not an ultimatum. Should the Federal Government disagree with this or that guiding principle of our draft it can submit proposals of its own. It is pointed out in the memorandum that the Soviet Government is ready to discuss any constructive proposals by the Federal Republic.

Today the Federal Government can still participate in a peaceful settlement. However, should it persist in its negative attitude the peace treaty will be concluded anyway. That is said most unequivocally in the memorandum. But in that case the Federal Government will be depriving itself of the possibility of defending its interests directly.

Today, when changes for the better are maturing in the world, the Federal Republic can make a worthy contribution by participating in preparation of a peace treaty with Germany, for consolidation of peace and security in Europe. This would create safe conditions for a fundamental change in relations between our states, that change which is so necessary for the interests of our two peoples and of general peace.

#### Adenauer Rejection

Moscow, in English to the United Kingdom, Mar. 5, 1961, 1830 GMT--L

(Text) The German Federal Government persists in rejecting a practical and realistic approach to a German peace settlement. This is obvious from Chancellor Adenauer's latest speech made at an election meeting in Cologne.